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18. AN INSTANCE OF THE COPRA BEETLE, *NECROBIA RUFIPES* DE GEER (COLEOPTERA: CLERIDAE) OCCURRING ON WHALE SKELETON

The nearly cosmopolitan copra beetle (also known as the red-legged ham beetle), *Necrobia rufipes* De Geer is known to occur in dried ham, bacon, cheese, bonemeal, fish manure, copra, dried fruits and nuts. A preliminary survey by the authors has shown that this beetle is a very destructive pest attacking stored dried fish along Malabar coast.

In the Department of Zoology, Malabar Christian College, Calicut, the skeleton of a toothed whale showed the presence of a considerable number of this beetle, inhabiting the crevices and spongy parts of the bones. The bones, having been recently prepared, must have still contained some dried animal tissues and fat, thus providing food for the beetles. It is presumed that the bones were infested either before they were brought to the department, or subsequently, as a result of migration of the beetles from a laboratory culture which was at that time being maintained in the department.

Incidentally, a review of literature has shown that there is a report on the occurrence of this beetle on an elephant skeleton.

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